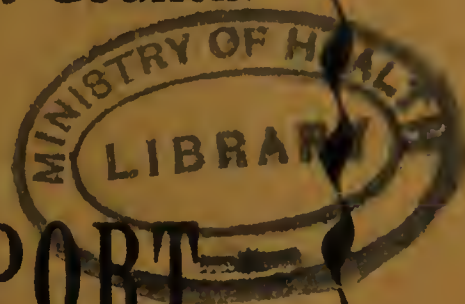


Downham Rural District Council.



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# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

FOR THE

Year ending 31st December, 1925.

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G. F. CROSS, M.B., B.S.,

*Medical Officer of Health.*



Downham Rural District Council.

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ATHOL HOUSE,  
DOWNHAM,

*April 16th, 1926.*

*To the Chairman and Members of the*

*Downham Rural District Council.*

Gentlemen,

I have much pleasure in presenting you with my 30th Annual Report. This, while dealing with the work done during the past year, is also a brief review of the past five years.

During this period there has been little change in the district as regards characteristics and occupations. The prospect of the district being benefitted by the English Oilfields, which are situated close to its northern boundary, has not been realized. The erection of a Sugar Beet Factory at Wissington, on the southern border is likely to prove a success and has given work to a number of people in the district. Again, the work carried out at Denver Sluice by the Ouse Drainage Board together with that undertaken by the Middle Level Commissioners has given employment to many who otherwise would have been out of work.

The Housing problem has also been actively dealt with and a good number of houses have now been completed. Many more houses are still required.

The health of the district has been very good, the number of notifiable infectious diseases having been small and mortality from them practically nil.

In view of a spread of small-pox in various parts of the Country, there is always the possibility of cases being brought into the district and I would again draw your attention to the difficulties which would arise in dealing with an outbreak. An Isolation Hospital to serve the requirements of the western part of the County is highly desirable.

On many occasions I have drawn your attention to the non-notification of Births, and last year I wrote to a number of

parents, who all replied that they were unaware of their liability to notify. I also wrote to several practitioners who had failed to notify. Of these, only two replied to my letters and in these cases the births occurred on the borders of the district and were probably sent to the Medical Officer of Health of the adjacent district. Since my last report on this matter in September when your Council authorised me to take legal proceedings, notifications have improved.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

G. F. CROSS,

Medical Officer of Health.

### **Natural and Social Conditions of the Area.**

Area	...	...	...	...	81932 acres.
Population (Census 1921)	...				14760
„ (estimated 1925)	...				15020
Number of inhabited houses (1921)	...	...			3757
Number of families or separate occupiers	...				3764
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	...£67,366
Sum represented by a penny rate	...				...£280

### **Physical Features and General Character of the Area.**

The Downham Rural District is situated in South-West Norfolk and comprises an area of 81,930 acres. There are 34 parishes which are divided into two sub-districts, Downham and Wiggenhall.

The district might be divided into two portions, which have marked characteristics differing as regards natural physical features, structure of houses and water supply. The river Ouse divides the district into two parts. On the east there is a gentle rising slope with a subsoil of gravel and chalk. This part may be called the upland and is well wooded and the soil is in most places fairly productive and the ordinary agricultural work forms the chief employment of the inhabitants. To the west is the



edge of the great fen district with a subsoil of dark blue stiff clay and called the lowland portion. The land is well drained and very productive. There are a great number of small holdings and market gardening and potato growing give employment to many.

### **Social Conditions.**

During the past year a Sugar Beet Factory has been erected at Wissington, which lies on the south bank of the river Wissey. Although not actually in this district, it is approached from this side of the river and has given employment to many people residing in the district.

## **VITAL STATISTICS.**

### **Births.**

Registered in the District				M.	F.	Total
Legitimate ...	...	...	...	137	141	278
Illegitimate ...	...	...	...	6	7	13
				<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total ...	...	...	...	143	148	291
Registrar General's Returns				145	150	295
Birth Rate per 1000 population				...	19'6	

### **Deaths.**

Registered in District ...	77	82	159
Less Outward Transfers ...			3
Add Inward Transfers ...			30
Net Total ...			186
Registrar General's Returns	93	92	185
Death Rate per 1000 population	...	12'3	

### **Infantile Mortality**

Eleven children died under one year of age giving an Infantile Mortality of 37'3 per 1,000 births.

In addition one child died outside the district.

## Causes of Death.

Bronchitis and Pneumonia	...	...	6
Debility from Birth	...	...	3
Premature Birth...	...	...	1
Found Drowned	...	...	1
			—
			11
Malnutrition (Inward Transfer)			1

There were 16 deaths from Cancer

Intestinal Tract	...	...	...	13
Uterus	...	...	...	2
Epithelioma of Lip	...	...	...	1

and four cases of Cancer died outside the district (Inward Transfer).

## Poor Law Relief.

The amount expended in Outdoor Relief during the year ended 31st December, 1925 was £3097 18s. 9d.

## Medical Relief.

Total number of persons in receipt of Medical Relief who were removed to General Hospitals for operations, &c. was 12 and one person was sent to a Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest.

## Vaccination Returns.

No of Births registered in 1925—363.

Successfully Vaccinated—154.

Exemptions—174.

Died unvaccinated—22.

Removed to other districts—3.

Total number of Certificates received during the year 1925, irrespective of the date of birth—160

Exemptions—160.

## GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE AREA.

There is no Isolation Hospital in the district.

Tuberculosis Cases are notified to the County Tuberculosis Officer and are visited by him or his assistants. Suitable cases are sent for treatment either to the Sanatoria in the County or to other places where special treatment is given. Shelters are provided when advisable by the County Council.

Cases requiring Hospital treatment are sent to the Hospitals at King's Lynn and Cambridge.

There is a Venereal Clinic at King's Lynn available for the district.

In the event of an outbreak of Small Pox there are no means of isolating a case. It might be possible to utilize a ward in the Union Infirmary.

There are no arrangements for Professional Nursing in the district, with the exception of the village of Southery which has recently engaged a District Nurse supported by voluntary contributions.

### **Ambulance Facilities.**

A Red Cross Ambulance is stationed in Downham and has been very useful. This is available for a radius of 15 miles. Mr. Marchant, the Quartermaster, has a valuable and excellent staff of Red Cross Assistants who readily respond to any call upon their time. He reports, "64 cases were dealt with during the year, comprising patients conveyed to and from Lynn and Cambridge Hospitals, also Swaffham, Wisbech, Lowestoft and Christchurch. There were many serious cases requiring careful handling and a few night cases, all of which were in charge of one or more Red Cross men who give their time and experience free often at considerable personal sacrifice. Thanks are due to Employers who give their assistants time off for this work."

This ambulance is not used for Infectious diseases.



## **Public Health Officers of the Local Authority.**

These consist of a Medical Officer of Health (part time) and a Sanitary Inspector (whole time).

## **Midwives.**

There are two midwives in the district, one residing at Shouldham Thorpe and one at Southery. The latter also acts as District Nurse.

## **Chemical Work.**

This is generally carried out at the County Laboratory at Norwich. Antitoxin is kept by the Medical Officer of Health for the use of Practitioners in the district.

## **Legislation in Force.**

Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1907, Sections 16 to 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 32, 33, 47, 48 and 49 came into force 1st January, 1908.

Byelaws with respect to New Buildings came into operation 1st January, 1913, since which date 130 house plans have been approved.

# **SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.**

## **Water.**

The Wisbech Water Works draw their supply of water from Marham, a village in the North East part of this district; there is no shortage nor treatment, the water is pumped direct into the mains to a tower 23 miles distant: the towns of Wisbech, March, and intermediate parishes are supplied from this source. The supply is constant.

828 dwelling houses in our district are supplied from this source. With the exception of one stand pipe (at St. Germans) the services are direct.

The proportion of the population who could be supplied from the present mains is approximately 80 per cent.

The water is drawn from springs, and the possibility of pollution is remote; the water is hard in character, and is not plumbo-solvent.

During the year the Council have extended the water mains at Stow Bridge, Watlington, and Wimbotsham.

### **Rivers and Streams.**

River water is used for drinking purposes to augment collected rain water in the Fen portion of the district.

There are two public pumps connected with the river Ouse, one each at Ten Mile Bank and Southery.

Pollution occurred in this river between Ely and Southery during the summer, but did not affect this district.

During the year a Sugar Beet Factory has been erected on the banks of the river Wissey, on the outskirts of this district. A sample of water was taken at Hilgay before the effluent was discharged from the factory, and one after the discharge of the effluent. The second report of the analysis states :—

“There is little to choose between the two samples, and we find no definite evidence of pollution of the effluent from the Sugar Beet Factory.”

Warning Notices were posted throughout the district during the summer as under :—

“Persons using water liable to pollution, such as river water, for drinking purposes, should exercise the greatest care in so doing. Pails, vessels, and tanks used for storage should be provided with covers; all pails, &c. should be kept clean, and stood in a cool place. The only way to render such water safe for drinking purposes is to boil it first.”

There are public pumps from wells at Shouldham, Southery, and Watlington. At Tottenhill Row there is an excellent spring,

which supplies this part of Tottenhill, this spring is protected. At Wereham there is a good supply of drinking water from a conduit.

### **Sewers and Drains.**

There are public sewers in nine parishes; these are attended to each year.

A new length of sewer was constructed at Shouldham Thorpe during the year, the County Council agreeing to pay half the cost. The district is rural in character: there are no sewage disposal works: the arrangements for drainage and sewerage may be considered suitable.

### **Closet Accommodation.**

The approximate numbers of each type of closet are—

Water Closets	...	...	162
Privies, vaults	...	...	1810
Privies, pails	...	...	1940

There are no populous or closely built centres in the district.

### **Scavenging.**

The Council contract for scavenging at Downham West, Fincham and Hilgay, the work is generally carried out satisfactorily.

Several complaints were made as to the irregularity in emptying the pails in Downham West.

As regards the pails in earth closets, most tenants are very neglectful and many are kept full and in a disgusting condition. No attempt seems to be made to put in cinders, earth or other absorbent material. Even in the schools little attention is paid to this.

### **Schools.**

The sanitary conditions and water supply of the schools are on the whole satisfactory.

At Runcton Holme I drew the Managers' attention to the following points :—No provision for the boys to wash, and the condition of the floor in the Infants' room.

At Wimbotsham the playground requires gravelling.

In three schools the playgrounds have been asphalted, which is a great improvement.

## HOUSING.

### (I) General Housing Conditions in the District.

(1)	PARISH.				No. of Houses	Houses Over-crowded
	Barton Bendish	...	...	...	95	3
	Bexwell	...	...	...	14	...
	Boughton	...	...	...	56	1
	Crimplesham	...	...	...	57	...
	Denver	...	...	...	203	1
	Dereham West	...	...	...	123	2
	Downham West	...	...	...	104	3
	Fincham	...	...	...	172	...
	Fordham	...	...	...	47	...
	Hilgay	...	...	...	385	7
	Holme	...	...	...	54	4
	Marham	...	...	...	167	2
	Roxham	...	...	...	11	...
	Runcton South	...	...	...	33	...
	Ryston	...	...	...	9	...
	Shouldham...	...	...	...	129	3
	Shouldham Thorpe	...	...	...	61	...
	Southery	...	...	...	278	4
	Stoke Ferry	...	...	...	161	4
	Stow Bardolph	...	...	...	330	9
	Stradsett	...	...	...	29	...
	Tottenhill	...	...	...	75	2
	Wallington	...	...	...	13	...
	Watlington	...	...	...	150	1
	Welney	...	...	...	100	4
	Welney West	...	...	...	131	3
	Wereham	...	...	...	134	2
	Wiggenhall St. Germans...	...	...	...	147	3
	Wiggenhall St. Mary Magdalen	...	...	...	184	2
	Wiggenhall St. Mary the Virgin...	...	...	...	78	...
	Wiggenhall St. Peters	...	...	...	48	...
	Wimbotsham	...	...	...	153	...
	Wormegay...	...	...	...	95	2
	Wretton	...	...	...	86	2



**(2) (a) Extent of Shortage or Excess of Houses :—**

In no parish is there an excess of houses ; in the five smallest parishes there appears to be sufficient accommodation, in the remaining parishes there is room for better houses, where it is possible to build, and let at a low rent.

There is a shortage of houses in the Fen portion of the district, which is gradually being met by the Council, and private enterprise.

**(b) Measures taken or contemplated to meet any shortage :—**

The Council again decided to build and tenders were accepted for 25 houses, the average price being £365 per house. Building has been started in the following parishes, Denver, Hilgay, Magdalen, Watlington, Welney and Wimbotsham.

Eight houses were completed and occupied before the end of the year ; 12 houses in last year's programme were completed, making a total of 20 Council Houses completed and occupied during 1925.

There are now 38 Council Houses occupied ; the rents are fixed at 6/- per week, plus rates, (approximate 7/- per week).

Plans were approved for 17 dwellings, 10 of which rank for a subsidy.

Five houses were completed during the year, in respect of which a subsidy of £75 per house was paid. Five houses were erected without a subsidy, and five semi-permanent dwellings (Army Hut Type) have been completed during the year. In addition seven semi-permanent dwellings (as above, and converted railway coaches) were erected in respect of which no plans were submitted.

During the last five years 69 dwellings have been erected by private enterprise.

Under the Housing Act, 1923, up to the end of 1925, certificates have been granted in respect of 37 houses, to rank for a subsidy. Nine certificates have been cancelled for non-



compliance with the conditions, 19 dwellings have been completed and the remainder are in course of erection.

## (II) Overcrowding.

(1) EXTENT :—There are 64 known cases of overcrowding (i.e. less than 300 cubic feet of air space per adult for sleeping) this means that not two per cent. of the inhabited houses are overcrowded, and cannot but be considered satisfactory in comparison with other districts.

(2) CAUSES :—Many of the larger houses are occupied by only one person; there are 127 houses each containing two bedrooms, and 36 houses with three bedrooms, occupied by one person. On the average there are 50 cottages kept unoccupied or used for storing furniture.

(3) MEASURES TAKEN OR CONTEMPLATED FOR DEALING WITH OVERCROWDING :—During the year 12 cases have been abated as under :—

Parish.	Family	Bed-rooms	Air space per head cubic ft.	How Abated.
Denver ...	6	2	274	Family reduced in numbers
Downham West	8	2	241	Obtained a larger house
Hilgay ...	7	2	219	" " "
Holme ...	7	2	203	Two bedrooms built on
Holme ...	6	2	231	Obtained a larger house
Magdalen ...	4	1	121	" " "
Shouldham ...	7	2	180	Family reduced in numbers
Southery ...	10	2	127	Obtained a larger house
Southery ...	8	2	169	Family left the district
Watlington ...	7	2	231	" " "
Welney ...	5	2	213	Obtained a larger house
Welney ...	9	1	104	Family left the district

During the last five years 80 cases of overcrowding have been satisfactorily abated.

(4) **PRINCIPAL CASES OF OVERCROWDING DURING 1925, AND ACTION TAKEN :—**In addition to the above cases, there has been one serious case of overcrowding. There were 18 persons, occupying three bedrooms ; after preliminary notice had been served four members of the family were sent away from home and arrangements were made for three others to sleep out. There is air space sufficient for seven adults.

At the end of October there were five adults and six children in the house.

The case was brought before the local Bench in November and an Order was made for abatement within two months. The position now is that there are four adults and seven children sleeping in the house. This is not yet satisfactory; and further action will be taken.

### **(III) Fitness of Houses.**

#### **(1) (a) *General Standard of Housing in the Area—***

In common with most rural districts there are good and bad houses, more of the former ; there are seven instances where houses are built in rows in addition to being small, there is little or no ground for the disposal of refuse ; the properties receive constant attention, and improvements have been carried out from time to time. Collectively the general standard may be taken as good.

#### **(b) *General character of the defects found to exist in unfit houses—***

Dampness, caused by absence of damp-proof course ; wet floors (brick or earth) ; lowness of rooms ; defective walls and roofs, insufficient light and ventilation.

(c) Defects generally due to neglect of repairs, in many cases the property has been handed down, and the rents, less charges, have been insufficient to allow of repair and improvements being carried out. No case of wanton neglect by the tenants was met with during the year.

(2) *General action taken as regards unfit houses under :—*

- (a) The Public Health Acts
- (b) The Housing Acts

The usual procedure is adopted, preliminary notices are served, followed by statutory notices when necessary.

In three cases proceedings were taken, and after the order of the Bench, the work was carried out.

(3) No special difficulties experienced; no special methods adopted.

**(IV) Unhealthy Areas—**

No complaints, nor representations made.

**(V) Byelaws—**

- (1) Existing byelaws working satisfactory.
- (2) No need for new byelaws.

**(VI) General and Miscellaneous.**

No special action taken under this heading.

## **HOUSING STATISTICS for the Year, 1925**

### **Number of Houses erected during the year—**

- (a) Total (including numbers given separately  
under (b) ... .. 42
- (b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts :
  - (I) By the Local Authority ... .. 20
  - (II) By other bodies or persons ... .. 5

### **1. Unfit Dwelling Houses**

- Inspection (1) Total number of dwelling houses  
inspected for housing defects (under  
Public Health or Housing Acts ... 31
- (2) Number of dwelling houses which were  
inspected and recorded under the  
Housing (Inspection of District) Regu-  
lations, 1910, or the Housing Consoli-  
dated Regulations, 1925 ... .. 21

(3) Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ...	3
(4) Number of dwelling houses not found to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation ... ..	14

## 2. Remedy of defects without Service of Formal Notices.

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers ...	7
---	---

## 3. Action under Statutory Powers.

### *A.—Proceedings under Section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925.*

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs ... ..	4
(2) Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices—	
(a) By owners ... ..	3
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners —	
(3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations of owners of intention to close ... ..	—

### *B.—Proceedings under Public Health Acts.*

(1) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied ... ..	8
(2) Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices—	
(a) By owners ... ..	6
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners ... ..	—



*C.—Proceedings under Sections 11, 14 and 15 of the Housing Act, 1925.*

(1) Number of representations made with a view to making of Closing Orders ...	4
(2) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made ...	1
(3) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined	—
(4) Number of dwelling houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made...	3
(5) Number of dwelling houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders ...	2

## INSPECTION & SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

### (a) Milk Supply.

(1) Action taken at to tuberculous milk, and tuberculous cattle ...	One carcase examined and found tuberculous.
(2) Number of Licenses granted for the sale of milk under special designations ...	Nil
(3) Refusal or revocation of registration of retailers for graded milk ...	Nil
(4) The summarised results of bacteriological examination of samples of graded or other milk ...	Nil

### (b) Meat.

(1) Meat inspection. The inspection is carried out by the Sanitary Inspector; during the year 218 carcasses were examined; 3 carcasses condemned and destroyed on the premises. There is no marking of meat.	
(2) Administration of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924, as regards stalls, shops, stores and vehicles ...	Nil
(3) There are no public slaughter houses.	



**Private Slaughter Houses :**

	In 1920	January 1925	December 1925
Registered ...	—	—	28
Licensed ...	—	—	—
	—	—	—
	—	—	28
	—	—	—

Total in use—19

**(c) Other Goods.**

Bake houses are periodically inspected ; improvements to three bake houses have been effected during the year.

**(d)** No food poisoning occurred during the year.

**(e)** Sale of Food and Drugs Acts. County inspector.

**Licensed issued during the Year.**

Petroleum Licenses ...	...	...	...	74
Knackers' Licenses ...	...	...	...	3
Game Dealers' Licenses ...	...	...	...	1
Canal Boats Acts Certificates	...	...	...	4

**Registration.**

Slaughter Houses ...	...	...	...	28
Purveyors of Milk ...	...	...	...	2

**Prevalence of, and Control Over Infectious Diseases.**

**Infectious Diseases generally, during the past five years.**

Upon the whole the district has been fairly free from notifiable Infectious Diseases.

The following Table shows the number of cases notified during the past five years.

It will be seen that Scarlet Fever cases are the most numerous. These have usually been of a mild type.

Year.	Scarlet Fever.	Diphtheria.	Enteric	Erysipelas.	Malaria	Pneumonia.	Puerperal	Cerebro Spinal	Ophthalmia Neonatorum	Tuberculosis	Total
1921	13	6	...	2	1	4	...	...	...	20	46
1922	22	3	1	7	2	4	...	...	3	17	59
1923	9	2	...	9	...	2	...	...	1	27	50
1924	1	1	1	10	2	11	1	1	1	23	52
<b>1925</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>...</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>97</b>

## 1925.

A considerable number of German Measles, which are not notifiable, have occurred. It has been difficult at times to distinguish between these and Scarlet Fever. The mild constitutional disturbance, the swollen glands in the neck, together with a slight rash lasting possibly only a few hours, do not indicate Scarlet Fever and yet in a few cases there has been a definite desquamation on the hands and feet and in one case an attack of nephritis.

Ordinary routine disinfection has been carried out, but it is difficult to satisfactorily disinfect a country cottage.

A supply of antitoxin is kept by the Medical Officer of Health for the use practitioners in the district. During the past year nine cases of Diphtheria were notified, and there were a number of cases of septic throats in which the diagnosis was difficult. Many swabs were taken and sent to the County Laboratory and the advantage of antitoxin made use of. There have been no deaths from this disease.

Whooping Cough and Mumps have been prevalent amongst the school children throughout the year.

A copy of the list of school absentees sent to the County Medical Officer is, in most cases, sent to the district Medical of Health.

TABLE B.

DISEASE.	Total cases notified.	Cases admitted to Hos- pital.	Total Deaths.
Small Pox ... ..	...	...	...
Scarlet Fever...	33	...	...
Diphtheria ... ..	9	...	...
Enteric Fever ... ..	6	2*	...
Puerperal Fever ... ..	1	...	...
Pneumonia ... ..	11	...	2
Erysipelas ... ..	13	...	...
Cerebro Spinal Meningitis ...	1	..	1
Tubercular Do. ... ..	1	...	1

\* Admitted to Union Infirmary.

## TUBERCULOSIS.

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths.			
	Pulmon-ary.		Non-pul-monary		Pulmon-ary.		Non-Pul-monary	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
0	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
5	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...
10	2	1	...	1	...	1	...	...
15	1	...	...	1	...	...	...	...
20	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
25	3	1	...	1	1	2	...	...
35	...	1	1	...	1	...	...	...
45	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
55	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...
65 upwards	1	1	.	...	1	2	...	...
Totals	9	7	2	4	3	5	...	...

The deaths include old and new cases. Three deaths were of non-notified cases.

### **Ophthalmia Neonotorum.**

There were no cases notified.





